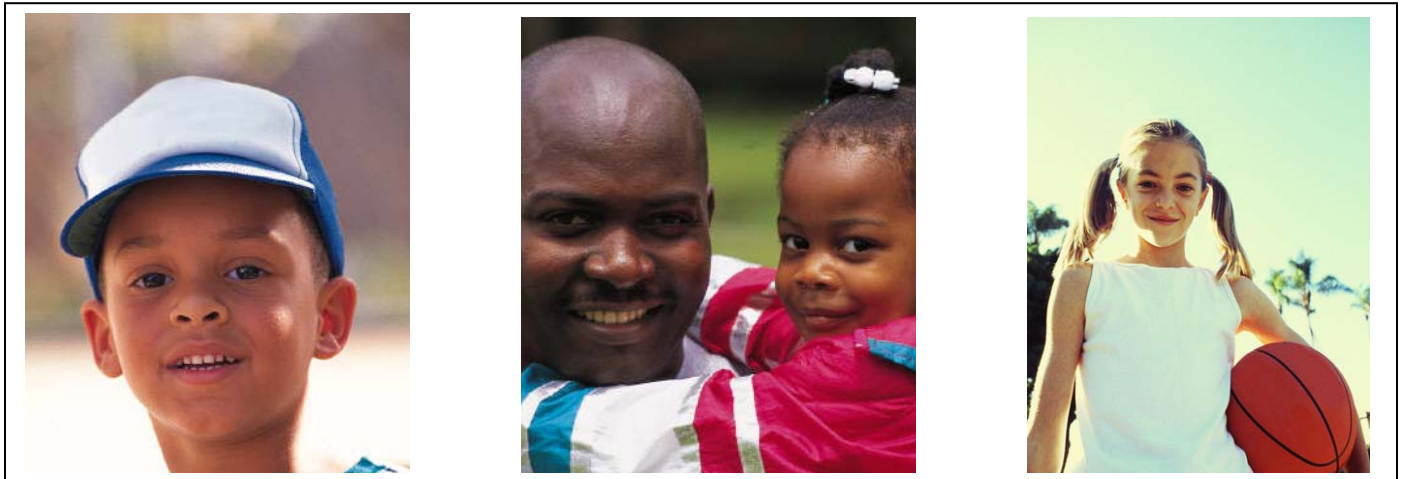


**Tomorrow's Vacancies,
Today's Priority:
Michigan Family Independence Agency's
Centrally Coordinated Hiring Pool
Summary Report**



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Executive Summary

Public human services agencies across the country struggle to provide quality service with a workforce plagued by high turnover, low wages, huge workloads and limited professional development opportunities. A major contributing factor is the often outmoded and ineffective human resources management (HRM) function found in many public agencies.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF), Human Services Workforce Initiative is the first national effort to address the critical condition of the nation's human services workforce. To establish a baseline of knowledge concerning HRM in public human services agencies and the quality of the human services workforce, the Foundation funded a study of HRM best practices from 2000 through 2002.

In March 2002, the Annie E. Casey Foundation commissioned CPS Human Resource Services (CPS) to study HRM best practices within public human services agencies. The study's objective was to identify jurisdictions in which HRM best practices have been effectively applied in agencies serving families, children, and neighborhoods.

CPS identified the Michigan Family Independence Agency (FIA)¹ Centrally Coordinated Hiring Pool (CCHP) as worthy of further study. The CCHP was designed to drastically reduce the length of time required to fill Children's Protective Services and Foster Care vacancies.

In October 2003, under a grant extended to the Michigan FIA, the Annie E. Casey Foundation commissioned CPS to research the effectiveness of the CCHP process, provide consulting services to enhance its effectiveness, and to evaluate its transportability to other human services organizations. In conducting our analysis of the CCHP, we found that:

- The CCHP process had a dramatic impact on the vacancy rate in the FIA Children's Protective Services and Foster Care programs, reducing the average vacancy rate from 9.3 percent during the two-year period preceding CCHP implementation to 3.2 percent during the five years following implementation.
- Between 1997 (two years before the CCHP process) and 2004 (five years after its introduction) the percentage of racial and ethnic minorities increased by more than one-third, from 26.5 percent to 35.4 percent of employees in the Services Specialist classification.
- In our sample, the average of the performance evaluation scores of the CCHP group was higher than the average of the scores of the traditionally-hired group on each of the measured competency areas.

¹ In 2004, the Family Independence Agency was renamed the Department of Human Services (DHS). For the purposes of this report, we will refer to the DHS as the Family Independence Agency.

- In a comparison of worker timeliness in initiating and completing investigations of child abuse and neglect, the CCHP group performed better on all three timeliness measures.
- FIA employees hired subsequent to the CCHP reported being generally very well satisfied with the hiring process and that they were a “good fit” for their jobs.
- When compared with a control group, FIA employees reported that employee turnover was less disruptive.
- When compared with a control group, FIA supervisors reported having more confidence in the qualifications of their new hires, seeing greater improvement in the quality of new employees hired over the past five years, and being more satisfied with the agency’s procedures for recruiting, screening, and hiring.
- Once the CCHP was fully implemented, departure rates of Services Specialists within the first 30 months after hire decreased 27 percent as compared to rates before implementation.
- Hiring Children’s Protective Services and Foster Care workers through the CCHP process provides the FIA an annual savings in recruitment and selection costs of between \$50,000 and \$60,000 per year.

Background

Public human services agencies across the country struggle to provide quality service with a workforce plagued by high turnover, low wages, huge workloads and limited professional development opportunities. A major factor in the human services profession's losing battle to recruit, retain, motivate and reward its workforce is the often outmoded and ineffective human resources management (HRM) function found in many public agencies.

Often problems stem from overly regulatory civil service systems that frustrate agencies' attempts to attract, reward and retain a superior workforce. At the agency level, the HRM function is often plagued by staffers who see their role as enforcing regulations, processing paperwork, and reacting to crises rather than thinking strategically and forging business partnerships with agency managers.

Within the past few years, there has been a growing awareness of the critical role HRM must play if the problems facing the human services workforce are to be addressed. In some jurisdictions, the HRM function has taken on a strategic role, forming business partnerships with line managers inside the agency. These agencies have implemented a number of innovative programs in an attempt to make the HRM function more flexible, responsive and supportive.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Human Services Workforce Initiative is the first national effort to address the critical condition of the nation's human services workforce – one that helps care for America's most disadvantaged children and families. The Initiative highlights the urgent need to recruit and retain human services workers who have the appropriate training and support to most effectively do their jobs. Through its extensive experience in the field, the Casey Foundation has found that a stable, prepared and motivated human services workforce yields real reform and better results for children and families.

To establish a baseline of knowledge concerning HRM in public human services agencies and the quality of the human services workforce, the Foundation funded a study of HRM best practices from 2000 through 2002. This study addressed two primary objectives:

- Determine how widespread the reported advances in public sector HRM were.
- Identify jurisdictions leading the way in implementing HRM reforms within particular technical areas, such as recruitment, salary administration and career management.

In March 2002, the Annie E. Casey Foundation commissioned CPS Human Resource Services to study HRM best practices within public human services agencies. The study's objective was to identify jurisdictions in which HRM best practices have been effectively applied in agencies serving families, children and neighborhoods. The project goals were to:

- Determine the “transferability” of the identified HRM best practices.
- Identify the likely barriers to successfully implementing the best practices across a wide array of jurisdictions.

Our search for best practice sites began with an intensive review of professional publications, including academic and HRM professional journals, leads from professional associations, and contacts with organizations involved in human services delivery. The preliminary research resulted in the identification of 91 potential best-practice locations where at least one high-level manager was interviewed by telephone. The intensive telephone screening process narrowed the list of best-practice sites to six organizations where on-site visits were made. Ultimately, two jurisdictions were identified as meeting the criteria we had established for further research.

CPS completed the best-practice search and provided a report to the Casey Foundation in April 2003, identifying the two human resources innovations we believed to be worthy of further study. One of these unique HRM programs is the State of Michigan Family Independence Agency, Centrally Coordinated Hiring Pool.

Centrally Coordinated Hiring Pool

Description and Background

The Family Independence Agency is Michigan's public assistance, children's services and family welfare agency. FIA directly administers programs through a network of over 100 county human services agencies in every county in Michigan. Although the FIA administers the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families grant, the Food Assistance program and a myriad of other financial assistance and social services programs, our review is focused on the impact of the CCHP in the children's services area, particularly with Children's Protective Services and Foster Care programs².

At the time of our study, the FIA had about 10,500 employees. About a third of the employees were in Wayne County (the Detroit area). There were approximately 130 office locations, ranging in size from under twenty employees to several hundred in the Central Office in Lansing. The HRM function was highly centralized within the Central Office, although some supportive HRM activities occurred in a number of the larger county offices.

In January 1999, the FIA implemented its new approach to hiring Children's Protective Services and Foster Care workers called the Centrally Coordinated Hiring Pool (CCHP) process. The new process centralized the FIA's recruiting and training efforts for nearly all Michigan counties. The objective of CCHP was to reduce substantially the vacancy rate of Children's Protective Services and Foster Care workers and the length of time jobs remained vacant, and to improve the quality of newly hired workers.

Michigan's innovative approach involves hiring new workers in anticipation of vacancies expected to occur weeks into the future. Hiring and training new workers weeks before the vacancies occur results in jobs being filled almost as soon as they become available. In essence, Michigan wanted a "just-in-time" inventory of new employees so that the children they served would receive services promptly.

Beginning in 1997, newly hired workers were required to attend an eight-week, new-worker training program before being allowed to carry a caseload. The eight weeks of training, which when added to the minimum eight weeks for the existing recruitment and selection process, essentially meant that most jobs remained vacant for at least four months. In addition,

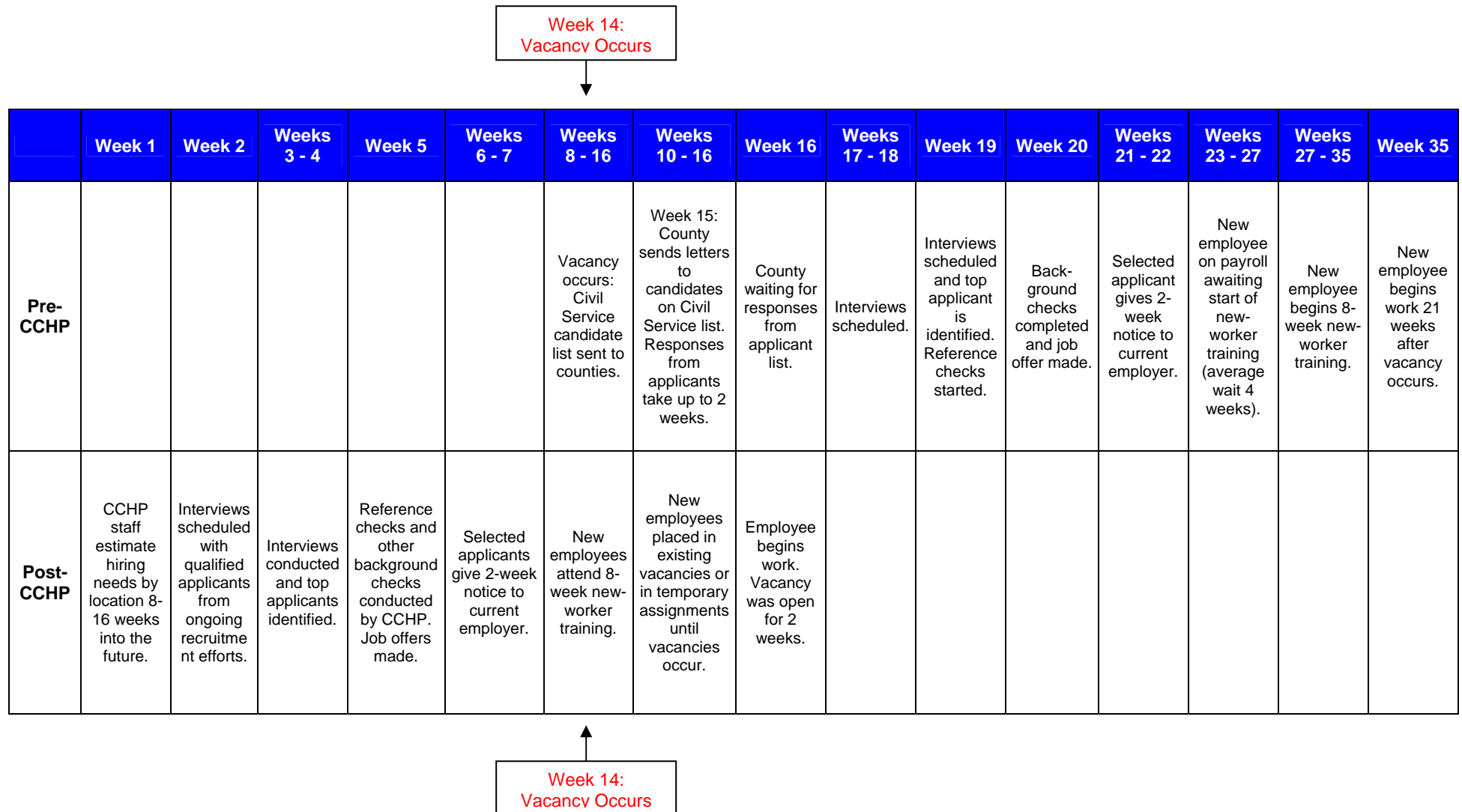
² At the FIA, caseworkers in the Children's Protective Services and the Foster Care programs are in the Civil Service job classification called the Services Specialist, but are referred to by their "working titles" of Children's Protective Services worker and Foster Care worker, respectively. All of the FIA's social workers (also generically called caseworkers) are in the Services Specialist classification, and are assigned to other children's services programs such as Adoption, Juvenile Justice, and Prevention, or to adult services programs such as Adult Protective Services. Throughout this report, the term "Services Specialist" refers to all social workers in the job classification, irrespective of program assignment. Since the focus of this study was on Children's Protective Services and Foster Care workers, any use of the terms "caseworker" or "worker" refers specifically to these workers.

previous to CCHP, the FIA's county offices interviewed and hired all of their Children's Protective Services and Foster Care workers from candidate lists created by the Michigan Department of Civil Service. The hiring process did not begin until after a vacancy had occurred.

Under the CCHP, the FIA projects hiring needs two to four months out and uses a centralized hiring process to hire employees to fill the expected vacancies. The CCHP process relies on continuous online recruiting and interviewing. A group of county managers comes to a central location to interview all candidates, rather than each manager interviewing only those candidates applying for jobs in their county office. Rather than being hired for a specific vacancy in a given location, new employees are hired based on where the Office of Human Resources (OHR) predicted vacancies would occur in several weeks. Job candidates are encouraged to make themselves available for several different work locations. New employees are hired and sent to training so that when a vacancy does arise, a trained employee is either available or soon-to-be available. Although newly hired employees usually do not know initially where they will be assigned after completing training, they do know they will be assigned to a location in which they have agreed to work.

Chart 1 (page 7) compares the steps in the FIA's hiring process before and after CCHP implementation. The Chart illustrates how a vacancy occurring in week 14 would be filled. In this example, the vacancy would be filled with a trained worker within two weeks using the CCHP process, and within 21 weeks under the former process.

Chart 1: Timeline for the FIA Hiring Process, Pre- and Post-CCHP Implementation



The convergence of three major factors provided the circumstances for making the FIA's innovative changes possible.

1. Years of frustration with the slowness of the hiring process reached crisis proportions when the FIA implemented a policy requiring that all new employees attend eight weeks of "new-worker" training before carrying a caseload. After this change, positions which had previously taken several weeks to fill remained vacant for an additional eight weeks.
2. Over time, Michigan gradually relaxed civil service rules, permitting the FIA considerable autonomy in the recruitment and selection process.
3. FIA recognized the HR function as an essential strategic player, creating an environment where an innovative, but controversial, hiring process could be tried. As a member of the FIA's top executive team, the HR Director had the opportunity to participate in setting the agency's strategic direction. FIA's strategic plan for becoming a national leader in human services delivery explicitly included a number of HR initiatives, including the CCHP process.

Although the "advance hiring" aspect of the FIA's initiative is perhaps the most unique element of the CCHP, it includes other features that we also consider best practices, in and of themselves. As part of the CCHP design, the FIA also made the following changes:

- The Internet is now used as the primary recruitment tool. Civil service rule changes that eliminated requirements for written testing allows the FIA to recruit applicants in real time rather than rely on often outdated candidate lists.
- Competency-based behavioral interviews have replaced the previous traditional interview format. FIA first validated the competencies for Children's Protective Services and Foster Care jobs that are associated with, and predictive of, superior job performance. They then adopted a behavioral interview approach that requires applicants to provide detailed examples of their experience in the specific competency areas.
- As part of the interview process, all applicants are required to compose a short letter at a computer work station. This exercise was developed to address a common complaint from field managers about the poor writing skills of many recent college graduates. In addition to establishing basic computer literacy, the primary purpose of the exercise is to obtain a sample of the applicant's writing skills.
- The previous "hit-or-miss" approach to background checks was replaced with a thorough procedure. After the written exercise and behavioral interview, telephone reference checks are conducted on all candidates being considered. FIA also completes a thorough review of criminal histories, driver's license records, and the state's child abuse and neglect system. Conditional offers of employment are made subject to the applicant's ability to pass the drug and alcohol screening process.

Project Description and Scope

In January 2004, under a grant extended to the Family Independence Agency, the Annie E. Casey Foundation commissioned CPS to research the effectiveness of the CCHP process, provide consulting services to enhance its effectiveness, and to evaluate its transportability to other human services organizations.

Although our preliminary investigation led us to believe that the CCHP was effective in reducing the vacancy rate through the process of “advance hiring,” our information was based on observation and anecdotal feedback. We had no doubt that vacancies were being filled more quickly, highly qualified staff were being hired, and that turnover had been reduced. However, none of these observations had been quantified. As part of our project plan, we sought to:

- Determine whether the vacancy rate had been reduced specifically through the use of the CCHP process.
- Determine the impact of the CCHP process on the diversity of the workforce.
- Determine whether employees hired through the CCHP process were at least as well qualified as those hired through the traditional process.
- Determine the impact of the CCHP process on client outcomes.
- Measure employee and supervisor satisfaction with the CCHP process.
- Determine whether the CCHP had any affect on employee turnover and retention.
- Determine whether the CCHP process has been a cost effective.

As part of its grant, the FIA sought support from the Casey Foundation to enhance and improve the CCHP process in several areas. FIA still believed that turnover among newly hired employees remained high, vacancy forecasting was difficult and sometimes inaccurate, and requiring supervisors to travel to the FIA Central Office to participate in the interview process was time consuming and cumbersome. AECF commissioned CPS to assist the FIA in the following areas:

- Research the literature on the use of “Realistic Job Previews” (RJP) to reduce early turnover and provide advice and consulting services to the FIA in the development of a RJP video.
- Assist the FIA in developing a vacancy tracking system and a turnover tracking system which could be used to forecast vacancies and for general HRM monitoring.
- Research the literature and provide recommendations to the FIA on an exit interview/exit survey strategy.

- Research the literature on the use of technology in the interview and selection process to address the problem of supervisors being required to travel to the central office for conducting interviews.
- Research the literature on “job fit” screening tools and recommend to the FIA a tool to help them identify employees who are well suited for Children’s Protective Services and Foster Care jobs. The anticipated outcome is that the job fit tool would help reduce turnover.

As a final step in this project, we were asked to evaluate the portability of the CCHP process to other human services jurisdictions and make recommendations that might ease implementation in other agencies. **Appendix A** is an overview of the CCHP process that can be used as a promotional document to be handed out at meetings, seminars and workshops. **Appendix B** is a detailed “How-To” Guide that provides a detailed description of how the FIA implemented the CCHP process, and is intended to be used as a guide for organizations considering replicating the process.

Project Constraints

Beginning in March 2004, we held a series of meetings with FIA managers and focus groups with children’s services supervisors. We quickly discovered that the timing was not optimal. The State of Michigan was facing a huge budget deficit, resources were severely limited, nearly 20 percent of the Children’s Protective Services and Foster Care workforce had been lost to early retirement, and hiring restrictions precluded the CCHP process from doing “advance hiring.” Although the hiring process was still centralized and behavioral interviews conducted, the practice of advance hiring had not regularly occurred for several months. We anticipate that advance hiring will not resume until the budget restrictions are lifted.

Because of our earlier work with the Family Independence Agency, we expected that the availability of data might be limited. However, we did not appreciate the magnitude of the problem until early into this phase of the research. Much of the data that we expected would be available simply does not exist. In addition, much of the data that does exist is very difficult to obtain. For example, extracting data from Michigan’s HR information system was sometimes very labor intensive for FIA staff. Given the very limited resources within the HRM operation, we tried to avoid making requests for data that might require great expenditures of FIA staff time. We must hasten to add that FIA staff made every effort to accommodate our requests. However, we tried to moderate our requests once we learned how time consuming some of them were for the staff.

Summary of Findings

Vacancy Rates

Michigan FIA, not unlike many other public agencies providing children's services, traditionally had great difficulty keeping Foster Care and Children's Protective Services jobs filled. In the mid to late 1990's, the problem had reached crisis proportions because of increasing public concern for the well being of disadvantaged children and ever growing caseloads. FIA created additional positions, but the struggle to fill new positions with candidates from out-of-date civil service registers could not keep pace with the rates of constant turnover.

Vacant positions resulting in uncovered caseloads created burnout for those who remained, resulting in yet more uncovered caseloads. Policy changes requiring that new employees complete eight weeks of training before carrying caseloads exacerbated the situation. FIA decided that the revolving door could only be slowed by taking a new approach.

The major impetus for the implementation of the CCHP process was the need to reduce the vacancy rate for Foster Care and Children's Protective Services jobs. There is no question that the CCHP reduced these vacancy rates – simple observation and anecdotal information verifies this. But there were no quantifiable measures or tools in place to evaluate the real impact.

In attempting to measure these vacancy rates, CPS found that the FIA had virtually no vacancy tracking data – it simply was not possible to identify all vacancies existing on a given date and to determine how long it took to fill them. However, by combining data from a number of different sources we were able to identify the number of vacancies existing at various points in time, and to compare vacancy rates before and after the implementation of the CCHP process. To determine the vacancy rate, we identified the number of vacancies as a percentage of the number of total authorized positions.

Our analysis demonstrates that the CCHP process had a dramatic impact on the vacancy rate in the Children's Protective Services and Foster Care programs. Average vacancy rates fell from 9.3 percent during the two-year period preceding CCHP implementation, to 3.2 percent during the five years following implementation. Prior to CCHP, the vacancy rate was above 7 percent almost 90 percent of the time. The post-CCHP vacancy rate was below 2 percent almost half of the time and rose above 5 percent only 25 percent of the time. Those higher vacancy rates occurred during the several-month period following an early retirement program when over 20 percent of the Services Specialist staff retired and budget-driven hiring restrictions prevented the normal filling of vacancies. See **Appendix C** for the details of this analysis.

Diversity

Another important CCHP project objective was to improve racial and ethnic diversity within the Services Specialist classification. Between 1997 (two years before the CCHP process) and 2004 (five years after its introduction) the percentage of racial and ethnic minorities increased by more than one-third, from 26.5 percent to 35.4 percent of employees in the Services Specialist classification.

The percentage of African Americans increased from 24.3 percent to 32 percent, and the percentage of White/Caucasian employees has steadily decreased from 73.5% of the classification in 1997 to 64.5% in 2004. Although still a very small percentage of the Family Independence Agency workforce, the number of Hispanics more than doubled, increasing from less than 1 percent of the classification to 2.3 percent. While the total number of males decreased from nearly 28 percent to 20 percent, the percentage of racial and ethnic minority males remained constant.

The increased diversity appears to result from a number of factors. With the recruitment and candidate application process now centralized within the OHR, there were more opportunities to target recruitment efforts toward minorities. The OHR also conducted special outreach efforts to minority groups. Table 1 (page 13) shows the percentage of Services Specialist staff in each demographic category for each year between 1997 and 2004.

**Table 1: Percent of FIA Services Specialist Workers
by Demographic and Year, 1997-2004**

Demographic	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
White Male	23.59	22.91	22.05	21.59	19.45	19.25	16.69	16.17
White Female	49.87	50.18	49.73	49.78	48.19	48.7	47.82	48.34
White/Caucasian Total	73.46	73.09	71.78	71.37	67.64	67.95	64.51	64.51
Black Male	3.62	3.82	4.02	4.28	3.07	3.81	3.61	3.42
Black Female	20.64	20.91	21.52	21.68	26.83	25.26	28.5	28.61
Black/African-American Total	24.26	24.73	25.54	25.96	29.9	29.07	32.11	32.03
Hispanic Male	0.13	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.14	0.66	0.61	0.59
Hispanic Female	0.80	0.91	1.07	0.98	1.09	1.54	1.78	1.69
Hispanic Total	0.93	1.00	1.16	1.07	1.23	2.2	2.39	2.28
Native American Male	0.13	0	0	0	0.07	0.11	0.09	0.14
Native American Female	0.40	0.36	0.63	0.62	0.41	0.17	0.28	0.36
Native American Total	0.53	0.36	0.63	0.62	0.48	0.28	0.37	0.5
Asian/Pacific Islander Male	0.34	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.14	0.06	0.05	0.05
Asian/Pacific Islander Female	0.40	0.55	0.63	0.71	0.61	0.44	0.52	0.59
Asian Pacific Islander Total	0.74	0.82	0.9	0.98	0.75	0.5	0.57	0.64
Male	27.81	27.09	26.43	26.23	22.87	23.89	21.05	20.37
Female	72.11	72.91	73.58	73.77	77.13	76.11	78.9	79.59

Employee Quality

Although hiring high-quality employees was always a priority, the FIA had not been able to devote resources to determine whether they were meeting this objective. Informal feedback from new-worker training staff and children's services supervisors was positive, but no information was quantified.

In order to objectively measure the impact of the CCHP process on employee quality, we selected a sample of non-probationary employees hired under the traditional system and a sample hired under the CCHP process, and reviewed their most recent performance evaluations completed by their supervisors.

All Children's Protective Services and Foster Care workers were evaluated on competencies that the FIA had validated as being predictive of, or associated with, successful job performance. These competencies include:

- Decision Making
- Initiating Action
- Self Management
- Communication
- Customer Service
- Managing Work
- Building Strategic Working Relationships
- Continuous Learning
- Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skills
- Stress Tolerance

In our sample, the average of the performance evaluation scores of the CCHP group was higher than the average of the scores of the traditionally-hired group on each of the competency areas. We believe the improvement is attributable to a number of factors, including the use of behavior-based interviews, more thorough reference and background checks, and the use of up-to-date applicant lists made up of current job seekers. See Table 2 below for further average performance evaluation scores before and after CCHP implementation.

Table 2: Average Performance Evaluation Scores, 2003

	Decision Making	Initiating Action	Self Management	Communications	Customer Service	Managing Work	Building Strategic Relationships	Continuous Learning	Knowledge and Skills	Stress Tolerance
CCHP Average	3.9	4.0	4.0	4.2	4.0	4.0	3.9	4.0	3.8	4.0
Non-CCHP Average	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.5	3.6	3.4	3.4	3.8
Difference	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.6	0.4	0.2

Client Outcomes

We had hoped to establish a link between the CCHP and client outcomes. It stands to reason that if worker quality improves and staff turnover is reduced, caseloads should become more manageable and service to clients should improve. It quickly became apparent that establishing a causal relationship where so many variables exist would be very difficult.

Policy changes, management practices, training opportunities, performance management systems, the budget situation, hiring restrictions, and employee morale all have an impact on productivity and service quality. Isolating one variable in a longitudinal analysis would be difficult under the best of circumstances. Further compounding the problem was the lack of available data.

Although a longitudinal analysis was not possible, we were able to do a comparative analysis of limited scope. FIA maintains data at the worker level related to the timeliness of initiating and completing investigations of child abuse and neglect. We reviewed a sample of approximately 20 percent of the Children's Protective Services workers, about half hired through the CCHP process and the other half through the traditional process.

When comparing the two groups, the CCHP group performed better on all three of the available timeliness measures. The rate at which the CCHP group initiated contact within 24 hours of the report of child maltreatment was seven percent greater than for the traditionally hired employees. The CCHP group conducted the "face-to-face" investigation within 72 hours in 84.6 percent of the cases, compared to 80.7 percent for the traditionally hired group.

The greatest difference between the two groups was in compliance with the policy requirement that investigations be completed within 30 days. The CCHP group achieved this in nearly 15 percent more of the cases than the non-CCHP group. See **Appendix D** for further details.

Employee and Supervisor Satisfaction

Our project plan included the development and administration of two surveys: one to gather information about FIA employees' views of the hiring process; and a second to measure FIA supervisors' satisfaction with the current recruitment and selection process. We compared the FIA responses to some of the questions with those from a control group from another agency

We began our survey preparation in March 2004. Given the budget and staffing issues at the FIA and that it had been several months since the CCHP had functioned as designed, we expected that supervisor opinions would be based on current circumstances.

The online survey was conducted during a three week period in late October and early November, 2004.

The results from the employee survey showed employees to be generally very well satisfied with the hiring process, and believe they are a "good fit" for their jobs. When compared with the control group, statistically significant findings included:

- FIA employees see employee turnover as being less disruptive.
- FIA employees liked the kind of work they do better.

- No real differences existed between the groups regarding perceptions of workload and workload distribution.
- FIA employees regarded new-worker training less favorably.

Supervisors generally believed that it was taking too long to fill vacancies and that turnover was hurting staff morale and client service. On the other hand, when comparing FIA supervisor opinions with the control group, statistically significant findings included:

- FIA supervisors had more confidence in the qualifications of their new hires.
- FIA supervisors saw greater improvement in the quality of new employees hired over the past five years.
- FIA supervisors were more satisfied with their agency's procedures for recruiting, screening, and hiring.

See **Appendix E**, *Best Practices Evaluation*, for further details on the survey methodology and analysis. See Attachments 7 and 8 of the *Best Practices Evaluation* for results from the Michigan FIA Supervisor Survey and the Michigan FIA Employee Survey.

Turnover and Retention

Although exact figures were unavailable, the FIA believed that the turnover of Children's Protective Services and Foster Care workers had been a major problem and looked to the CCHP initiative to reduce turnover. By using a competency-based, behavioral interview³, the FIA believed that the newly-hired employees would be a "better fit" for the job, and less likely to leave.

We compared the departure rates⁴ of Services Specialists hired during three different time periods. Table 3 (page 17) shows the departure rate after the first two and-one-half years on the job (the longest observable period following the use of behavioral interviews) for the three time periods studied.

³ See *Employee Quality* (page 13) for information on the FIA worker competencies. FIA designed behavioral interviews, which focus on behaviors and actions taken in previous work-related situations. In a recent study,* using assessment centers to evaluate applicants had the greatest correlation ($r = .65$) with job performance. Behavioral interviews were the next best – and far less expensive – technique, with a correlation ranging from .48 to .61. Non-behavioral, traditional interviews have a correlation factor of .05 to .19, suggesting a random, non-predictive relationship between the interview and job performance. (Spencer, Lyle M. and Signe M Spencer. 1993. *Competence at Work*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.)

⁴ For purposes of this study, the departure rate is the percentage of employees hired in each of the three review periods who left the Services Specialist classification (e.g., resignation, discharge, promotion, demotion, transfer to a different classification, etc.) within 30 months.

Table 3: Percentage Departure Rates in the First 30 Months of Employment for FIA Services Specialists

Period	Date of Hire Range	Percentage Departure Rate
Period 1: Prior to CCHP implementation	January 1, 1998 - December 31, 1998	24.5
Period 2: Post-CCHP implementation but prior to use of behavioral interviews	March 26, 2001 - December 31, 2001	21.3
Period 3: Post-CCHP implementation and with use of behavioral interviews	January 1, 2002 – May 31, 2002	17.9

The departure rate decreased 13 percent (a drop of 3.2 percentage points) between Period 1 and Period 2, and decreased 27 percent between Period 1 and Period 3. This finding is consistent with our review of the literature on employee interviewing which identified a number of studies that found a strong correlation between behavioral interviewing and job performance and turnover.

It should be noted, however, that the departure rates within the first year do not appear to have been affected by the CCHP process. In all three of the periods, approximately ten percent of the newly hired employees left within the first year. As mentioned in the Realistic Job Preview section of this document, our study suggests that early turnover is the result of employees having an unrealistic or incorrect understanding of the nature of the job.

Although employee transfers from one county to another may not be considered as turnover from a departmental perspective, the county offices perceive it as such. From the county's perspective, a transfer is as disruptive as a vacancy. Since implementation of the CCHP process, fewer transfers have occurred, and within the first 30 months after hire, transfers dropped from almost 12 percent in period 1, to seven percent in Period 2, to only 2 percent in Period 3. Tables 4 and 5 (pages 18 and 19) show the departure and transfer rates by period in more detail.

Table 4: Retention Rates for Services Specialists, Pre- and Post-CCHP Implementation

	Services Specialists Hired Between 1/1/98 and 12/31/98				Services Specialists Hired Between 3/26/01 and 12/31/01				Services Specialists Hired Between 1/1/02 and 5/31/02			
Retention Interval - Months	No. who Left During Interval	Percent who Left	Cum. No. who Left	Cum. Percent who Left	No. who Left During Interval	Percent who Left	Cum. No. who Left	Cum. Percent who Left	No. who Left During Interval	Percent who Left	Cum. No. who Left	Cum. Percent who Left
0-6	13	8.4%	13	7.1%	4	4.3%	4	4.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
7-12	2	1.3%	15	9.7%	5	5.3%	9	9.6%	9	10.1%	9	10.1%
13-8	9	5.8%	24	15.5%	4	4.3%	13	13.8%	2	2.2%	11	12.4%
19-24	8	5.2%	32	20.6%	6	6.4%	19	20.2%	3	3.4%	14	15.7%
25-30	6	3.9%	38	24.5%	1	1.1%	20	21.3%	2	2.2%	16	18.0%
31-36	2	1.3%	40	25.8%	1	1.1%	21	22.3%		0.0%		0.0%
37-42	5	3.2%	45	29.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
43-48	6	3.9%	51	32.9%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
49-54	7	4.5%	58	37.4%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
55-60	3	1.9%	61	39.4%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
60-66	1	0.6%	62	40.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
67-72	7	4.5%	69	44.5%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
73+												
New Hires	69				94				89			

Table 5: Transfer Rates for Services Specialists, Pre- and Post-CCHP Implementation

	Services Specialists Hired Between 1/1/98 and 12/31/98			Services Specialists Hired Between 3/26/01 and 12/31/01			Services Specialists Hired Between 1/1/02 and 5/31/02		
Retention Interval - Months	No. who Trans'd	Cum. No. who Trans'd	Cum. Percent who Trans'd	No. who Trans'd	Cum. No. who Trans'd	Cum. Percent who Trans'd	No. who Trans'd	Cum. No. who Trans'd	Cum. Percent who Trans'd
0-6	4	4	2.6%	1	1	1.1%	0	0	0.00%
7-12 mo	5	9	5.8%	1	2	2.1%	0	0	0.00%
13-18	1	10	6.5%	4	6	6.4%	0	0	0.00%
19-24	5	15	9.7%	0	6	6.4%	0	0	0.00%
25-30	3	18	11.6%	1	7	7.4%	2	2	2.25%
New Hires	155			94			89		

Cost Effectiveness

Because applicants are usually willing to work in several different counties, the centralized CCHP process results in fewer applicants being interviewed, and prevents the same applicants being interviewed multiple times in different counties. Cost savings accrue from the more efficient interviewing process and the reduced number of applicants requiring screening.

There are also economies of scale resulting from the centralized process. Those who regularly perform processes like reviewing credentials, scheduling applicants, and checking references are more efficient than those performing them intermittently.

CPS conducted an analysis of the hiring costs of the eighty-four new Children's Protective Services and Foster Care workers hired through the CCHP process during the first six months of 2002. We then estimated the costs of hiring those same employees if the selection process had occurred in the counties in which they were ultimately placed. The annualized cost of hiring the employees through the CCHP process ranged from \$75,600 to \$81,300. The annualized cost of hiring at the county level was estimated at \$127,800 to \$141,200.

Hiring Children's Protective Services and Foster Care workers through the CCHP process provides the FIA an annual savings of between \$50,000 and \$60,000 per year, when compared to the cost of each county doing their own hiring. Decentralizing the hiring process would increase costs in the range of approximately 70 percent. For further details, see **Appendix F.**

CCHP Improvements and Enhancements

In their search for continuous improvement, the FIA identified enhancements to their recruitment and selection process in addition to the CCHP. The Casey Foundation provided financial support to the FIA to develop these enhancements, and commissioned CPS to provide assistance in these efforts.

Realistic Job Preview

FIA considers employee turnover to be a continuing problem, especially for employees working in the Children’s Protective Services and Foster Care programs. Particularly troubling is what the FIA terms “early turnover” – turnover which occurs within the first several months of employment. FIA’s field supervisors, OHR staff, and new-worker trainers all reported having newly hired employees resign during new-worker training or within the first few weeks or months on the job. In each of the three periods we studied, departure rates for the Services Specialist classification hovered around 10 percent during the first year of employment

FIA believes that early turnover is caused by job applicants accepting employment offers without a good understanding of the day-to-day realities of the job. The employee and supervisor surveys confirm that belief. Seventy percent of supervisors agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that, “newly hired employees do not have a realistic understanding of what a child welfare caseworker job is really like before they begin the job.” Only 22 percent of the employees responded that they understood the nature of the job to a great extent before they were hired.

FIA believes that the use of a Realistic Job Preview (RJP) would help reduce early turnover. A RJP is a recruiting approach that is designed to communicate both the desirable and the undesirable aspects of a job before an applicant has accepted a job offer. RJP’s could consist of written materials, work site visits, videos or verbal descriptions of the job. Michigan wanted to produce a video to show to job applicants before their job interview, or even before being scheduled for an interview.

CPS researched the literature and provided the FIA with our findings regarding the effectiveness of RJP’s for Children’s Protective Services and Foster Care jobs. We also provided recommendations and consulting services for producing a RJP video.

We concluded that a well-developed RJP would very likely have a significant impact on reducing turnover for child welfare jobs. Although not effective for all jobs, ample evidence exists that RJP’s are effective for jobs that are complex, stress producing, and where job applicants have unrealistic, preconceived notions about the job. (See **Appendix G** for our RJP research summary and recommendations to the FIA.)

Our support in producing the RJP video included assisting with determining the video's content, editing drafts of the script, and reviewing draft versions of the video. We also developed two surveys to measure the impact of the RJP video. (See [Appendix H](#) and [Appendix I](#) for the surveys.)

Vacancy and Turnover Tracking Systems

FIA's current HR information system does not track employee turnover in a way that is useful, and does not track staff vacancies at all. Vacancy reports and turnover reports are essential tools for any workforce planning process. They would be particularly useful with the CCHP system because the accurate forecasting of vacancies is critically important in determining the correct number of new employees that should be hired for each location. The OHR staff has historically struggled, usually unsuccessfully, with attempts to piece together turnover and vacancy data to satisfy the requests of departmental managers, legislators, and the public.

FIA believes that turnover is greatest for those workers in the Foster Care and Children's Protective Services programs. Many employees in these programs transfer to other children's programs (e.g., Adoption, Juvenile Justice, and Prevention) or to adult services programs. However, because all of these employees are in the same job classification, the FIA has not been able to isolate turnover rates for any of the individual positions due to limitations in the current HR data system.

In addition, the FIA cannot track other important turnover information (e.g., turnover rates for Foster Care workers leaving the Foster Care program, for Foster Care workers leaving the agency, or for Foster Care workers leaving a particular county).

As a first step in designing an automated system to track turnover, CPS designed several turnover-tracking templates, which provide the FIA with examples of reports showing turnover data across a wide variety of variables (see [Appendix J](#)).

FIA also has similar tracking and reporting requirements for employee vacancies as for turnover rates. As the preliminary step in addressing this need, we also developed several vacancy-tracking report templates (see [Appendix K](#)).

Developing an automated database for tracking vacancies and turnover has proven to be a daunting task. FIA regards their HR information system to be very difficult to work with, and we have found that designing these tracking systems has been far more complicated than we had first imagined. We have worked closely with the FIA in the development of automated systems that will produce reports based on our templates.

Exit Interview/Survey

Although turnover-tracking systems provide valuable information that can be analyzed to help better understand the reasons for turnover, they do not tell the whole story. Invaluable information about the reasons for turnover can often be gleaned from exit interviews and exit surveys (EIS) with departing employees. Several years ago, the FIA developed an exit survey for departing Children's Protective Services and Foster Care employees, but the completion rate of the EIS is very low.

CPS surveyed the relevant literature and prepared a report with recommendations to the FIA on how the EIS process could be improved to provide better information about why employees leave their jobs. Some of our findings include:

- Departing employees are more likely to give candid feedback when they are assured that their reasons for leaving will be kept confidential and will be presented as aggregate information in summary reports.
- The EIS should be an integral and consistently applied part of the process used for concluding the employment relationship.
- Exit interviews and exit survey each have their own specific advantages and disadvantages. Interviews generally have a higher response rate and provide more in-depth responses; surveys are easier to quantify, provide assurances of confidentiality and can be done at far less cost.

For the full report, see [Appendix L](#).

Video Taped Interviews

Under the CCHP model, children's services supervisors from FIA's county offices participate in the selection process by conducting the applicant interviews and evaluating the candidates. FIA believes that supervisors are better qualified than HR professionals to evaluate the applicant interviews. Maintaining field presence in the selection process is also important in keeping an element of ownership of the hiring process with the county offices. The downside to the process is that supervisors must travel to Lansing or Detroit to participate in the interviews. These interviews incur significant travel costs and time on the part of supervisors.

A possible solution that the FIA has considered for several years is videotaping the interview: a HR professional would conduct the interview while videotaping the applicant, and the taped interviews would be sent to supervisors for evaluation and scoring.

CPS researched the feasibility of implementing this process. Our review of the literature revealed that the use of technology is increasingly being introduced into the selection process. Telephone interviews, videotaped interviews, and the use of video conferencing equipment has become quite common in recent years. We were, however, able to identify only one other

jurisdiction that uses videotaped interviews to make final hiring decisions. Nonetheless, we believe that the process could be very workable and cost efficient, and recommended to the FIA that they pilot the process. (See [Appendix M](#) for our full report.)

Job Fit Screening Tool

FIA has come to recognize the relevance of “job fit” to performance and retention. FIA believes that a substantial number of Children’s Protective Services and Foster Care workers “burn out” after a few years on the job, while many others continue to perform well for many years, even to retirement. FIA has observed that those who thrive on the job over the long term appear to have certain personality characteristics that differ from those who burn out after a few years. Characteristics such as “resiliency” and the ability to separate work from one’s personal life appear to make a difference in longevity.

Currently, the FIA asks Children’s Protective Services and Foster Care applicants to complete a “Job Fit Measures” inventory. The inventory provides information about how much time applicants expect to spend on various job activities, and asks them to assess themselves on nineteen behavioral characteristics. This inventory is not used in the applicant screening process however, because the FIA has found that most applicants simply provide the expected answers to the questions. FIA has asked CPS to help determine if there are job fit personality assessment tools that could be used to help predict both good performance and longevity.

We focused on personality tests based on the Five Factor Model (the Big Five). We found that personality can be reliably measured and is a valid predictor of job performance for most jobs. Personality assessment tools should be used in conjunction with structured interviewing. Using this model, the structured interview serves to verify the results of a personality assessment and to determine the impact of personality data on job performance.

Implementing this model for a particular job would require a job analysis that demonstrates the importance of personal attributes for job performance. FIA has conducted a job analysis that produced competencies indicating personal attributes for the child welfare positions. Michigan FIA can utilize personality assessments to test candidates’ proficiencies in these competencies to better ensure the success of their child welfare workers once they are hired. The use of a personality test based on the Big Five model in the interview process may be very helpful in the selection of successful Children’s Protective Services and Foster Care workers. (See [Appendix N](#) for our full report.)

Application to Other Jurisdictions

In order to provide other agencies with detailed information about how to implement an advance hiring process similar to the CCHP, the Annie E. Casey Foundation asked CPS to develop a “How-To Guide” that would be easily accessible to any organization. See **Appendix B** for the Guide.

We believe the CCHP process could be effectively replicated, in whole or in part, in almost any large human services agency. The most unique aspect of the CCHP is the element of “advance hiring.” In order to project vacancies several weeks in advance, an organization must be large enough to have somewhat predictable turnover. Although the FIA is a statewide organization with employees in every county of the state, the process of advance hiring could as easily work in a large county or city human services agency.

The CCHP program is a multifaceted process that we believe consists of several “best practice” components. Although the “advance hiring” component is the essence of the CCHP program, other best practice components include:

- Online recruiting
- Behavioral interviewing
- Competency validation for Children’s Protective Services and Foster Care positions
- Conducting thorough background and reference checks

An organization of any size could replicate any of these components.

Many of the enhancement projects we worked on with the FIA could also be replicated in most other human services jurisdictions. We believe the Realistic Job Preview video will have a significant impact on addressing the issue of early turnover in child welfare jobs. The format used in the turnover templates could be easily modified to meet the needs of any agency, and the exit interview/exit survey strategy recommended to the FIA could be useful in most organizations. Although we only recommended a pilot for videotaping employment interviews, we believe that the idea has real promise in terms of applicant evaluation and selection-process documentation.